

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 STATE 308232
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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 308232

NODIS

FOR DR BRZEZINSKI

FOLLOWING REPEAT DAMASCUS 7990 ACTION STATE DEC 28.

QUOTE S E C R E T DAMASCUS 7990

NODIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM MURPHY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR US SY XF

SUBJ: ASSAD AND PRESIDENT CARTER'S TRIP

REF: A) STATE 302567 B) DAMASCUS 7852

SUMMARY: ASSAD CONSIDERS PRESENT MOMENT NOT REPEAT NOT
PROPITIOUS FOR MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER BECAUSE OF
NEGATIVE DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING PEACE PRECESS CAUSED BY
PRESIDENT SADAT'S INITIATIVES. END SUMMARY.

1. DEPUTY FONMIN AL-KHANI SUMMONED ME TO FOREIGN MINISTRY

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BY MIDNIGHT TELEPHONE CALL DECEMBER 27/28. AL-KHANI
APOLOGIZED FOR THE LATENESS OF THE HOUR BUT SAID THAT
PRESIDENT ASSAD HAD CHARGED HIM TO ENSURE DELIVERY OF
LATTER TO PRESIDENT CARTER PRIOR TO PRESIDENT'S DEPARTURE
ON HIS OVERSEAS TRIP. HE ALSO REGRETTEED THAT PRESIDENCY
HAD BEEN UNABLE TO LOCATE ITS TRANSLATOR TO FURNISH US
OFFICIAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXT. FOLLOWING, THEREFORE, IS

THE EMBASSY'S UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION OF ASSAD'S LETTER.
(ORIGINAL BEING POUCHED TO NEA/ARN.)

2. QUOTE DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

I WAS PLEASED TO RECEIVE YOUR LETTER DATED DECEMBER 6, 1977 DELIVERED TO ME BY SECRETARY OF STATE VANCE DURING OUR MEETING ON DECEMBER 13, 1977 IN WHICH YOU REFERRED TO THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUING CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN US CONCERNING THE SITUATION AND LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

I SHARE YOUR VIEW THAT IT IS IMPORTANT WE CONTINUE OUR EXCHANGES. I AM CERTAIN THAT SECRETARY OF STATE VANCE HAS CONVEYED TO YOU MY VIEWPOINT CONCERNING EVENTS TAKING PLACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE WAKE OF THE INITIATIVE OF THE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT AND HIS MEETINGS WITH ISRAELI OFFICIALS. SINCE MY MEETING WITH SECRETARY VANCE, NOTHING HAS CHANGED THIS VIEWPOINT OF MINE. ON THE CONTRARY, THE RECENT ISMAILIA MEETING INCREASED MY CONVICTION THAT THE ROAD FOLLOWED BY THE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT WOULD NOT LEAD TO REALIZATION OF A JUST AND COMPREHENSIVE PEACE AND THAT THE MOST THAT IT COULD LEAD TO WOULD BE A SEPARATE RECONCILIATION (ARABIC "SULH") BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL, THE CONSEQUENCES OF WHICH WOULD OBSTRUCT THE PEACE PROCESS WHICH HAS BEEN AND REMAINS THE OBJECTIVE WE ARE WORKING TO REALIZE.

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I DO NOT NEED TO REPEAT WHAT I HAVE AFFIRMED MORE THAN ONCE, THAT THE DESIRED PEACE WOULD NOT BE REALIZED BY PARTIAL SOLUTIONS SUCH AS EGYPT PREVIOUSLY MADE WHEN IT CONCLUDED THE SINAI II AGREEMENT OR THE SEPARATE RECONCILIATION WHICH INDICATIONS ARE WILL BE THE FINAL OUTCOME OF THE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT'S INDIVIDUALISTIC INITIATIVES. YOU WILL APPRECIATE THAT THIS VIEWPOINT OF MINE IS NOT NEW. I WOULD HAVE WANTED VERY MUCH TO MEET AGAIN WITH YOU AFTER OUR CORDIAL MEETING IN GENEVA HAD DEVELOPMENTS IN THE AREA SITUATION PROCEEDED IN A LESS NEGATIVE WAY AND (HAD THEY) ADVANCED THE CHANCES OF HOLDING THE GENEVA CONFERENCE IN THE WAY IN WHICH WE WERE TRYING TO CONVENE IT, WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL PARTIES CONCERNED WITH THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE AND THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT.

I TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE NEW YEAR TO SEND TO YOU MY BEST WISHES AND HOPE THAT 1978 WILL BE MORE PROPITIOUS FOR ACHIEVEMENT OF A JUST AND COMPREHENSIVE PEACE IN THIS REGION AFTER THE LONG TRAGEDIES THROUGH WHICH ITS PEOPLE HAVE LIVED FOR THIRTY YEARS. SINCERELY, HAFEZ ASSAD. DECEMBER 27, 1977 UNQUOTE

3. COMMENT: DELIVERY OF THIS LETTER FOLLOWED NOT ONLY THE ISMAILIA MEETING, TO WHICH ASSAD REFERS, BUT ALSO HIS DECEMBER 27 MEETING WITH JORDANIAN PRIME MINISTER BADRAN AND HUSSEIN'S COURT ADVISOR ABDUL HAMID SHARAF. I AM INCLINED TO DOUBT THAT WHATEVER TRANSPIRED BETWEEN THE JORDANIANS AND SYRIANS INFLUENCED THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION NOT TO MEET WITH PRESIDENT CARTER. AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF OFFICIALLY-INSPIRED MASS DEMONSTRATIONS DENOUNCING SADAT'S INITIATIVES AND THE RESPONSIBILITY WHICH THE SYRIAN LEADERSHIP STILL ATTRIBUTES TO WASHINGTON FOR THESE INITIATIVES, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN AT BEST AWKWARD FOR ASSAD TO MEET WITH PRESIDENT CARTER AT THIS MOMENT.

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RM I AM VERY GLAD, HOWEVER, THAT WE MADE THIS OFFER. IT UNDERLINED PRESIDENT CARTER'S DESIRE TO STAY IN CLOSEST POSSIBLE TOUCH WITH ASSAD, THEREBY REAFFIRMING THE VALUE WE SEE IN THIS RELATIONSHIP. AWARENESS OF OUR OFFER, AND THE TACTFUL WAY IN WHICH IT WAS PHASED, IS WIDESPREAD IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AS WELL AS IN THE PRESIDENCY AND WILL HAVE A POSITIVE EFFECT ON OUR FUTURE DEALINGS WITH SYRIA. HAD THE MEETING OCCURRED, I DOUBT IT WOULD HAVE HELPED CONVINCE ASSAD THAT SADAT IS ON THE CORRECT PATH, OR EVEN THAT, AT THIS POINT IN TIME, ASSAD SHOULD ORDER A SLACKENING OF SYRIA'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST EGYPT. THE PRESENT CAMPAIGN, I FEAR, WILL HAVE TO RUN ITS COURSE OWING TO A COMPLEX OF REASONS, INCLUDING ASSAD'S CONVICTION THAT SADAT HAS WEAKENED ARAB SOLIDARITY TO NO AVAIL SYRO-EGYPTIAN RIVALRY, SYRO-PLO RELATIONSHIPS AND ASSAD'S EVIDENT DETERMINATION TO STEER SYRIA ON THE EXTREMELY TRICKY COURSE BETWEEN YIELDING TO RUJECTIONIST PRESSURES AND ONE SUPPORTING SADAT'S INITIATIVE. MURPHY UNQUOTE VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, PERSONAL OPINION, CAT-B, CHIEF OF STATE VISITS, MEETINGS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 28-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE308232
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: O:SVALERGA
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X3
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: N770009-0630
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 2
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771211/aaaaaixr.tel
Line Count: 153
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 54f15dfc-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: 78 STATE 302567, 78 DAMASCUS 7852
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 118503
Secure: LOCK1
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ASSAD AND PRESIDENT CARTER'S TRIP
TAGS: PFOR, US, SY, XF, (ASAD, HAFIZ), (CARTER, JIMMY)
To: WHITE HOUSE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/54f15dfc-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009